

APR 2

# BULLETIN



Log #

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Instructors | Tutors | Learners | Administrators | Coordinators | Resource Centres | Learning Centres

How big is the book collection in your classroom? I think we have about 200-300 books on display in our literacy classroom and many more in storage. We have about one-third to one-half readers - small books mostly, many written by learners. The rest of the books range from picture books on animals to biographies to health pamphlets. We have been building our collection for about 15 years.

We are now in our own space and have the books arranged on the walls in flat bookcases that show the covers. Many of our walls are covered in books! When a new student comes in, one of the first things we do is try to find a book of interest at the right level. We let books go home and lose a lot that way, but it is worth it.

I'm constantly surprised at what the learners enjoy. Lately there is more demand for romances and NO interest in factual material. Last term no one seemed worried that certain books were written for children; this term I've already got two rejections of a book because it's too childish! Every once in a while, a book hits dead air no matter what I do, and the next semester it might be popular.

When you are building a collection, you, the teacher, are another consideration. I've never been particularly successful with reading books that include exercises, but many teachers use them all the time and their learners love them. I picture them working well, but it just doesn't happen for me. Other teachers are dismayed at what I suggest they try.

I'm convinced that the book collection is one of the strong successes of our program. We often have learners who just "sit around and read." One new student said she "hoped I didn't mind if she read a lot." As a literacy teacher, my heart went pitty-pat!

You can see why I love to work on the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*. Expand all of the above to math, science, videos, computer software and games, and I'm in my element. As a member of the committee, you get a shipment of resources twice a year to field-test and keep! Also, in my institution, we have money for resources for the learners, and I would wish this for all learners. □

Evelyn Battell

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**Title:** *Vocabulary Power: Successful Strategies for Word Mastery*  
**Author:** Rose Christoforo-Mitchell  
**Publisher:** J. Weston Walch, 1998  
**Website:** <http://www.walch.com/>  
**Available:** Publisher, your local bookstore OR  
 Artel Educational Resources  
 5528 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC V5H 2G2  
 Tel: (604) 435-4949 Fax: (604) 435-1955  
 Toll free: 1-800-665-9255 Toll free fax: 1-877-435-1955  
**ISBN:** 0-8251-3805-1  
**Price:** \$28.50

## Vocabulary Power

Reviewed by Nancy Ross

This is a textbook of reproducible worksheets intended for a broad range of students. All worksheets fit into the general category of vocabulary building but are grouped into a number of smaller categories. These include Classifying Words, Using Analogies, Extending Word Meaning, Distinguishing Multiple Meanings, Forming Contractions, Forming Plurals, Combining Forms, and Using Prefixes and Suffixes. Within each category, students can be given one or many worksheets to work on that particular kind of vocabulary challenge. Students like the way that skills are broken down and taught in sequential steps within a category. The book also reinforces other lessons taught in the classroom, including spelling rules, pronunciation, and commonly confused words.

As an English instructor, I found this book very useful. I think its best feature is its flexibility because I can photocopy the pages that I think will work best with a particular student or group of students. I can also then link a single worksheet in with another book or another series of lessons. Thus, I often use

these *Vocabulary Power* worksheets as class openers: students usually take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the worksheet, and then we move on to other work. Students can easily work on these in groups, but they are also not too hard to do independently. Although most of the worksheets seem to work for students of varying abilities, some worksheets are quite challenging. However, when used as a "fun opener," every student seems to enjoy learning through these exercises.

I find some vocabulary books expose students to words they would never use and would seldom read elsewhere; fortunately, the words chosen for the vocabulary exercises in this textbook are ones that expand beyond the basic level without moving too far from the familiar. For example, words like "exceptional," "destitute," and "obsolete," are not rare, but many students do not use them in their own speaking and writing. *Vocabulary Power* seems to strike the right balance in finding words that are relevant but challenging. □



## SAMPLE PAGE

Excerpts from *Vocabulary Power* by Rose Christoforo-Mitchell.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Classifying Words—Three

### Does It Belong?

In each row below, cross out the one word which does not belong.

- |                |             |           |          |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. counterfeit | fake        | imitation | genuine  |
| 2. drudgery    | labor       | activity  | leisure  |
| 3. hindrance   | assistance  | benefit   | support  |
| 4. precious    | expensive   | valuable  | cheap    |
| 5. special     | exceptional | unique    | ordinary |
| 6. radishes    | cabbage     | potatoes  | sausage  |
| 7. flounder    | salmon      | shrimp    | chicken  |
| 8. grapes      | tomatoes    | peaches   | zucchini |
| 9. basketball  | wrestling   | spectator | football |
| 10. pecan      | pistachio   | walnut    | rice     |

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Recognizing Homonyms—Two

### Pick and Choose

Choose the correct homonym to complete each sentence. Write the word on the blank.

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| (weight, wait)     | 1. The bus was late so we had a long _____.                          |
| (whether, weather) | 2. The _____ is very cloudy today in New Haven.                      |
| (idol, idle)       | 3. Brad Pitt is an _____ of many teens.                              |
| (pedal, peddle)    | 4. It is harder to _____ a bicycle uphill.                           |
| (council, counsel) | 5. Ms. Donahue is always willing to _____ her students after school. |
| (aisle, isle)      | 6. The usher at the cinema led us to the _____.                      |
| (course, coarse)   | 7. My science _____ this year is very difficult.                     |
| (duel, dual)       | 8. In earlier times, a quarrel was very often settled by a _____.    |

**Title:** *From Time Immemorial: The First People of the Pacific Northwest Coast*

**Author:** Diane Silvey; illustrated by Joe Silvey

**Publisher:** Pacific Edge Publishing Ltd., 2000  
P.O. Box 350, Gabriola, BC V0R 1X0  
Tel: (250) 247-8806 Fax: (250) 247-8299  
Email: [pacifiedge@classroomresources.com](mailto:pacifiedge@classroomresources.com)

**Website:** [www.classroomresources.com](http://www.classroomresources.com)

**Available:** Publisher or your local bookstore

**ISBN:** 1-895110-65-3

**Price:** \$18.95

## From Time Immemorial

Reviewed by Richard Van Camp

*From Time Immemorial* provides an overview of the history (from pre-contact to the present) of the coastal First Nations from the Eyak in Alaska to the Yurok, Hupa, and Karok in California. This excellent resource can be used for social studies or First Nations or Canadian history curriculum. The author, Diane Silvey, and the illustrator, Joe Silvey, have provided a treasure for both students and instructors as they illuminate such topics as "Living in Balance With the Sea – Fishing;" "Living with the Spirits – Ceremonies and Beliefs;" "Expressing a Culture – Art, Drama, Music and Games;" "Living with Other Nations – Trade and Warfare;" and "Losing Rights and Freedoms – Legislation and Discrimination." It's easy to see why this text, which is accessible for fundamental level students, was awarded the British Columbia 2000 Book Award. Jan Weiten notes, "The structure of the book allows one to use a single chapter as a stand-alone unit. If we were exploring 'the arts' in different time periods or cultures, I could easily incorporate Chapter 7 into that Unit."

Student comments included "really enjoyed the photographs and drawings;"

"learned a lot of new things;" "told me my history as a native;" "told me how to do things like cooking and hunting and to have respect for what we are hunting and fishing and thanking the spirits;" and "It told us what to do with leftovers from the food." Roy, a student at the Nanaimo campus was delighted to see a picture of his grandfather in the book. Another student remarked, "It told me what my parents couldn't tell me about my history."

Instructor comments were: "The writing, thinking and discussion exercises are relevant and interesting for students;" "beautiful layout;" "liked the 'What do you think?' questions;" "clear assignments;" "good detailed history;" "like the glossary in the back;" "contemporary viewpoints expressed;" and "like the stories with a moral for each chapter."

Pacific Edge Publishing is to be commended for publishing such an ambitious project. Both Diane and Joe Silvey have honoured the spirit and history of First Nations people, and they should be proud of themselves. This is definitely an asset to any classroom. □





## SAMPLE PAGE

Excerpt from *From Time Immemorial* by Diane Silvey.

Illustrations by Joe Silvey. Photos by Vancouver Museum/Danielle Hayes and Dorothy Haegert.

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### CHAPTER SEVEN



### Expressing a Culture

#### Music and Dance

At winter ceremonies, masked dancers represented supernatural beings. As they danced, they seemed to transform into the animals they were portraying.

Music was produced from a variety of whistles, drums and rattles. Eerie sounds were produced from **bull roarers**. People sang and drummed on long wooden planks.

drum



shell  
rattle

Whistles of all shapes, sizes and sounds were used. Rattles were made from shells or carved from wood.

Dancers often had deer hooves, shells or small wooden paddles sewn on their clothes. As they danced, the objects would move to the rhythm of the dancer.

Certain songs and dances were owned by individual families and could only be performed by family members.



Hok Hok Cannibal Bird Mask at the potlatch given by Chief Tony Hunt at Alert Bay, 1987.

#### Games

A variety of games were played by First Nations people—shooting at a target, wrestling, a type of **quoits**, string figures, dice and a bone game called **slahal** or **lahal**.

The game of **slahal** or bone game involves two teams. The object of the game is to identify in which hand the player is holding the unmarked bone. The player rapidly passes a pair of cylindrical bones back and forth in his hands. The opponent on the opposite team has to guess which hand holds the unmarked bone. While all this is going on, the player's team calls out and heckles, trying to distract the opposing team's player.

**Title:** Thumbprint Mysteries Series: *Murder on the Loose, Murder on Lovers' Bridge, Murder in the Shadows*

**Author:** Ellen Godfrey

**Publisher:** NTC/Contemporary Publishing Company

**Website:** <http://www.ntc-cb.com/>

**Available:** Your local bookstore OR  
McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd.  
300 Water Street, Whitby, Ontario L1N 9B6  
Tel: (905) 430-5000 Fax: (905) 430-5020

**ISBN/Price:**

|                                 |               |        |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------|
| <i>Murder on the Loose</i>      | 0-8092-0684-6 | \$7.95 |
| <i>Murder on Lovers' Bridge</i> | 0-8092-0685-4 | \$8.95 |
| <i>Murder in the Shadows</i>    | 0-8092-0686-2 | \$8.95 |

## Thumbprint Mysteries: Murder on the Loose, Murder on the Lovers' Bridge, Murder in the Shadows

Reviewed by Joyce Cameron

I am delighted to say that this trio of books is a thoroughly good read. The author worked with Literacy students through the Victoria R.E.A.D. program, and the language of the books testifies to the process. I have not used the books with a group, but the students (all women) who read them were very enthusiastic and went through them very quickly. As the books are one hundred-plus pages each, I was surprised at the speed at which they were read. I also did not have to promote them. I simply suggested them to one woman, and they went around the classroom from there.

Each book can be read separately, although reading them in order allows one to see the progress of the characters. The heroine is an overweight, divorced woman of twenty-four who struggles with self-esteem and her abusive, former husband while building a network of friends and solving murder mysteries. The plot is based on the premise that Janet, the heroine, has won a lottery and uses the hundred

thousand dollars to start the Women's Rescue Committee. The first job that they take on is finding the murderers who killed three immigrant women who had been brought over to work as nannies.

The dialogue is realistic; the characters are fairly realistic too. The material is definitely adult. The first book begins with two close friends dealing with the issue of one of their partners having forced the other woman to have sex with him. The books are meant to encourage women to stand up to abusive situations and to rely on themselves and other women for help. They are not anti-male, and they deal with issues of race comfortably.

The students who read the books each found that the third story dragged a bit. I suspect that is because they read them in quick succession, and thus the story may have seemed a bit formulaic. They all read the third novel from cover to cover, so it captivated them enough for that! □



## SAMPLE PAGE

Excerpt from *Murder on the Lovers' Bridge* by Ellen Godfrey.

# CHAPTER 1

Have you ever felt that you were finally getting your act together, and then—boom!—everything falls apart? That's what happened to me.

It all began when I realized that someone was following me and I started getting these scary hang-up calls at home.

Maybe I shouldn't have been surprised. After all, in the last six months I've made a lot of enemies.

Then something really bad happened. I made a serious mistake and as a result, my friend, Nita Montez, was murdered.

Everyone tells me it wasn't my fault, but I don't agree. I'll tell you what happened, and you can decide for yourself.

I'd better tell you about Nita. Nita Montez was the last person I would have expected to be murdered. That's because Nita was a psychic. She could read your palm

**Title:** *By Truck to the North*  
**Author:** Andy Turnbull with Debora Pearson  
**Publisher:** Annick Press Ltd., 1999  
**Website:** www.annickpress.com  
**Available:** Your local bookstore OR  
 Firefly Books  
 Tel: (416) 499-8412 Fax: (416) 499-1142  
 Toll free: 1-800-387-6192 Toll free fax: 1-800-450-0391  
**ISBN:** 1-55037-550-4  
**Price:** \$14.95

## By Truck to the North

Reviewed by Ruth Chambers

On the surface, *By Truck to the North* is a story about a truck driver's trip from Vancouver to Tuktoyaktuk. In reality, it is far more than just a narrative. Author Andy Turnbull touches not only on the present, but also on the past. For example, the author refers to some of the historical highlights of both the Klondike and Cariboo gold rushes. In addition to the main story line of the Vancouver to Tuktoyaktuk trip, there are smaller anecdotes within each chapter about real-life situations, such as women truckers and living within the confines of a truck cab. This well-written book touches on the flora, fauna, and culture of many different areas between the two cities, and as such could be used as the foundation for a complete unit on British Columbia or the Yukon. Also, the mini-stories within each chapter could be developed into full units on any number of fronts: history of the RCMP, dog sledding, or camels in the Cariboo, to name just a few.

*By Truck to the North* is definitely a book that will quickly attract the attention of both male and female students because of the

broad subjects that are touched upon. The book encompasses nine chapters with catchy titles like "Thrills, Chills, and Hills" and "Wild Times Just Ahead." Students may want to read this 88-page book cover to cover, or they may choose to start the book by reviewing the numerous pictures that have accompanying sidebars. The sidebars present wonderful information, including data on the mighty moose, northern lights, and wolves. A multitude of full-colour pictures and maps provide excellent support to the sometimes-difficult text. The pictures enable most students to comprehend the book, even though it is filled with compound and complex sentences and upper level vocabulary.

From the first page to the last, this book is filled with interesting information for students at many different levels. The myriad pictures help newer readers with comprehension as well as providing added enjoyment and information to higher level readers. Student and instructor reviewers alike gave this book a resounding thumbs up! □





## SAMPLE PAGE

Excerpt from *By Truck to the North* by Andy Turnbull with Debora Pearson.  
Photo from Tourism and Parks, Northwest Territories, Inuvik Region.  
Reproduced by permission of Annick Press Ltd.



You might think this is the place where you actually cross the Arctic Circle – but it's not!

Ken had a close call with some caribou," I told Bill. "He was coming around a corner when he found about fifty caribou asleep out on the road. Ken hit the brakes and sounded his horn, but the caribou just stood up and looked at him until he had almost stopped. Then they began running ahead of the truck, up the road."

"Ken couldn't build up any speed with the caribou blocking his way so he spun out going up a hill. He had to stop and when he did, the caribou stopped, too, and watched him. Then, when Ken got going again, they started running in front of him, just like they did before. 'Now that was irritating!' Ken said."

Every trucker who has crossed Eagle Plains has a tale to tell about the powerful winds that blow here. My favourite one is the story about the driver who was hauling an empty trailer across the plains. When he looked in his mirror, he got a big shock. Two wheels of his trailer were in the air and only the weight of his tractor kept the whole thing from blowing over!



## Land of the Midnight Sun

For people who live in the Arctic, winter days can be long. The sun doesn't rise above the horizon for about a month and there is little sunlight at that time. But in summer, things look much brighter. For two months or so, the sun doesn't set – there is daylight for 24 hours a day and the sun is up at midnight!

**Title:** *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*  
**Author:** Eleanor Coerr  
**Publisher:** Penguin Books Canada, 1977  
10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, ON M4V 3B2 Canada  
Telephone: (416) 925-2249 Fax: (416) 925-0068  
**Website:** www.penguin.ca  
**Available:** Publisher or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-698-11802-2  
**Price:** \$7.50

## Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

Reviewed by Rena Neufeld

*Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* is an easy-to-read 50-page book with a powerful message. It is based on the true story of a young girl from Hiroshima who becomes ill with leukemia as an after-effect of the atomic bomb attack on her city almost a decade before.

While she and her family struggle with her illness, Sadako learns of a Japanese legend; it claims that if a sick person folds one thousand paper cranes, the gods will grant her wish and make her healthy again. As Sadako attempts to fold one thousand paper cranes, and as her illness progresses, her spirit of courage and determination are revealed.

The vocabulary in this story is not difficult; however, the subject matter and the ideas presented are captivating for readers at any level. The book is divided into short chapters; each chapter contains one black-and-white painting. I found the illustrations quite appealing, but none of the student reviewers mentioned them. The book also includes step-by-step illustrated directions for folding the same origami crane that Sadako

made. This provides an opportunity to branch out into some hands-on work or art work that appeals to many students and gives some students a chance to shine using a different skill.

The students who read this book liked it because it was a true story, it was short, and it was easy to read. Many students commented on the themes of courage, bravery, inner strength and spirit. One student writes, "The end gave me goose bumps because I am a mother, and I could imagine the strength it must take to watch your child slowly die." Another student writes, "She was just a little girl, but she was strong inside."

This story offers instructors the opportunity to introduce or reinforce lessons in history, political activism, and personal triumph in the face of adversity. It would be difficult to read this story and not be touched by it. Eleanor Coerr, the author, first heard Sadako's story when she lived in Japan. Clearly, she was moved enough by the story to write the story for her American audience. □

## A SECRET NO LONGER

For several weeks it seemed that the prayers and good luck symbols had done their work well. Sadako felt strong and healthy as she ran longer and faster.

But all that ended one crisp, cold winter day in February. Sadako was running in the school

yard. Suddenly everything seemed to whirl around her and she sank to the ground. One of the teachers rushed over to help.

"I . . . I guess I'm just tired," Sadako said in a weak voice. When she tried to stand up, her legs went wobbly and she fell down again. The teacher sent Mitsue home to tell Mr. Sasaki.

He left his barbershop and took Sadako to the Red Cross Hospital. As they entered the building Sadako felt a pang of fear. Part of this hospital was especially for those with the atom bomb sickness.

In a few minutes Sadako was in an examining room where a nurse x-rayed her chest and took some of her blood. Dr. Numata tapped her back and asked a lot of questions. Three other doctors came in to look at Sadako. One of them shook his head and gently stroked her hair.

By now the rest of Sadako's family was at the hospital. Her parents were in the doctor's office. Sadako could hear the murmur of their voices. Once her mother cried, "Leukemia! But that's impossible!" At the sound of that frightening word Sadako put her hands over her ears.



**Title:** *Salmon Summer*  
**Author:** Bruce McMillan  
**Publisher:** Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998  
 215 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003 U.S.A.  
 Tel: (212) 420-5800 Fax: (212) 420-5899  
 Toll free: 1-800-225-3362  
 Email: [trade\\_customer\\_service@hmco.com](mailto:trade_customer_service@hmco.com)  
**Website:** [www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com)  
**Available:** Publisher or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-395-84544-0  
**Price:** \$22.95

## Salmon Summer

Reviewed by Evelyn Battell

*Salmon Summer* is a short book describing traditional fishing on Kodiak Island, Alaska. The colour photographs on every page tell the story. A nine-year-old boy, Alex, helps his father catch the salmon in gill nets, pick the fish from the nets, and land the catch. They then clean the fish and hang them to dry. We learn of the magpie, fox, and bear who also feed on the salmon. One student writes that she couldn't believe how the seagulls eat out the eyeballs and guts of the fish! Later Alex helps with fishing for crab and, his favourite, halibut. Virginia in Duncan says, "I like him sharing with the elders. He's doing what his parents did before him." Another student comments that she likes how everyone pitches in with the work.

An important part of *Salmon Summer* is the dedication inside the front cover where Bruce McMillan acknowledges and honours the extended family that hosted him and taught him their traditional ways of fishing and living. It is clear as you look through the simple text and beautiful

photographs that these activities have gone on in this same way at this same location for generations.

The book is about Alex's experience, so many students who read it remembered their times fishing with their families and even teaching their children the traditional ways. On the other hand, the written material is factual, which means the book easily appeals to adult students. The text is limited and good for beginning readers.

Because the photographs are so explicit and detailed, even non-readers could tell much of the story of the book. One student was interested in a picture of a Dungeness crab; she had never seen one before.

This book is written about a child in Alaska. It is not specifically aimed at adults and not Canadian. It is written and photographed by a non-First Nations man. Given these factors, the book is a remarkable find for our classrooms. □



## SAMPLE PAGE.

Excerpt from *Salmon Summer* by Bruce McMillan. Photo by Bruce McMillan.  
Reproduced by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.



The last salmon Alex catches is a male humpy. He can tell this one's a male because it is changing. Its jaws are becoming hooked. Its back is growing a hump. Its life cycle is almost complete.

All the salmon will soon die upstream after expending their last energy to mate and cover their eggs with gravel. The floating bodies will become easy meals for the wildlife. But not this salmon. This one will be Alex's bait for the biggest fish of all—a halibut.



**Title:** *Balto and the Great Race*  
**Author:** Elizabeth Cody Kimmel  
**Publisher:** Random House of Canada  
2775 Matheson Blvd., E., Mississauga, Ontario L4W 4P7  
Tel: (905) 624-0672 Fax: (905) 624-6217  
**Website:** <http://www.randomhouse.ca/>  
**Available:** Publisher or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-679-89198-6  
**Price:** \$5.50

## Balto and the Great Race

Reviewed by Arlee Schmidt

I like this book very much. It was about this sled dog named Balto. He lived in Nome, Alaska. He becomes a hero in 1925 when dozens of children come down with diphtheria and need antitoxin serum. The serum was about 650 miles away. There were no roads, just an icy wilderness. The only way to get the serum to Nome was by the sled dogs. The problem was ~ could the sled dogs deliver the serum in time to save the children? Balto was the head dog that led the team.

The class at Vancouver Community College liked the pictures and drawings. They also liked the people in the book. They liked when the children gave all their pennies to help Balto. They thought the size of the print was good. When Balto was famous and old, he was sold to a museum. One of the learners said, "I like how the man was able to understand Balto's feelings. Otherwise Balto would have been dead in the museum because the weather wasn't what he was used to and he didn't have proper food or company." Another learner liked how it showed that humans also receive help from animals. She thought this book was excellent.

Another instructor had mixed reviews. The book is written with children in mind and some learners will resist any book written for children. On the other hand, the story is true, and one learner said she liked the detail.

This is a story of endurance and understanding between owner and dogs. One learner felt it was lacking in action, but if you are an animal lover you will really like this novel.

I found the print easy to read although some of the words are little hard to read. The book is designed for advanced readers. I like the map that showed where the sled team went to help the children. I found myself, when I was reading the places where the sled team went, I would look back at the map and follow the sled team. This book is a short novel; it's only a hundred pages long. It has black and white drawings, and they are done very nice. I think that learners will enjoy this book. □



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Bluff, Alaska

The tiny town of Bluff wasn't much more than a few buildings near Daniel's Creek, but it was bustling with activity when Balto and the team pulled in.

Men had flocked to Bluff because black sand had been found surrounding Daniel's Creek, and people thought black sand was a sign that gold was there. But on the day Balto arrived, no one was thinking about gold. Every hope was focused on the

**Title:** *Helen Keller*  
**Author:** Margaret Davidson  
**Publisher:** Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1969  
175 Hillmount Road, Markham, Ont. L6C 1Z7 Canada  
Toll-free 1-800-268-3860 Toll-free fax: 1-800-387-4944  
Email: [custserve@scholastic.ca](mailto:custserve@scholastic.ca)  
**Website:** [www.scholastic.ca](http://www.scholastic.ca)  
**Available:** Your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-590-42404-1  
**Price:** \$5.50

## Helen Keller

Reviewed by Debbie Booth-Johnson

This short novel is part of a series of 21 biographies offered by Scholastic books. It tells a compelling story in an easily accessible way. The language and sentence structures are appropriate for beginning readers without being condescending. It is 90 pages long and the print size is easy to manage. There are simple illustrations throughout the book and, at the end, three period photos of Helen Keller and Ann Sullivan, her teacher. The Braille alphabet is also printed on the cardboard cover at the back of the book. Students enjoyed experiencing how it feels.

Helen Keller's story is a timeless classic that is well received by adult literacy students. Her life story is both inspirational and endearing. Although it is difficult to imagine the blindness or deafness that Helen endured, students have experienced their own communication difficulties using reading and writing. Part of the appeal of this novel may be that students recognize what she was able to achieve against all the odds. They also appreciate the essential

role of Ann Sullivan as her teacher. As one student said, "I felt so happy about Helen because she worked so hard to learn and finally was successful." To me the most touching part of the story is when Helen realizes that everything can be named, including emotions, and that she can learn to use those names to communicate her needs and desires.

Helen Keller was exceptionally intelligent and was driven to learn as much as she could as fast as humanly possible. Eventually she attended Radcliffe College. During her mainstream education, few special concessions were made for Helen's disabilities. She did not expect to be treated differently because of her blindness and deafness. After college, she went on to become an inspirational speaker and a powerful advocate for people with disabilities.

*Helen Keller* is an excellent choice for beginning students who are looking for the challenge of reading a longer story. □



And with each movement her face grew brighter. For suddenly she knew! The shapes that the stranger was making with her fingers *did* have a meaning! *Everything had a name*. Everything in the whole world had a name! And she could learn them all!

"Oh, yes, Helen," Annie whispered. "That's it!" And she bent down to hug the shaking little girl.

But Helen pulled away. She didn't have time for *that* now! She dropped to the ground and thumped on it hard. *Name it!* she was demanding. So—laughing, sobbing—Annie did.

Helen paused for a moment. She fluttered off the word on her fingers. She nodded. Then she whirled away again. In the next few minutes she learned six new words. And she knew what they meant!

Then suddenly Helen stopped. She thumped herself across the head. Annie burst out laughing. "Yes, dear," she said. "There's a word for you too." And she bent down and spelled H-E-L-E-N into the little girl's hand.

Helen had a name at last!

Now Helen reached out and patted Annie's arm. At first Annie thought she was just saying "thank you." But Helen wanted something more than that. She patted Annie's arm again.

"Oh," said Annie. "So you want to know that too." And Annie spelled T-E-A-C-H-E-R into Helen's waiting hand.

A few minutes later two new people came out of the pump house. The wild little girl was gone. And so was the stranger. Now Helen Keller and Teacher walked hand in hand.

**Title:** *What a Life! Stories of Amazing People*  
**Author:** Milada Broukal  
**Publisher:** Addison Wesley Longman, 2000  
Pearson Education  
26 Prince Andrew Place, Don Mills, Ont. M3C 2T8  
**Tel:** (416) 447-5101 **Fax:** (416) 443-0948  
**Toll free** 1-800-567-3800 **Toll free fax:** 1-800-465-0536  
**Website:** <http://www.pearsoned.ca/index.html>  
**ISBN:** 0-201-61996-2  
**Price:** \$21.95

## What a Life! Stories of Amazing People

Reviewed by Ruth Chambers

*What a Life! Stories of Amazing People* is a book of 25 short biographies and accompanying exercises. Each unit has a 250 to 300 word biography on an amazing person. The biographies cover a wide range of people from William Shakespeare to Muhammad Ali. Lesser known people are also featured, such as the golfer Babe Didrikson Zaharias and the artist Wang Yani. The profiles include a fairly good mix of ethnic groups, gender, occupations, and nationality. Although no Canadians are featured, there are enough various stories to tempt the majority of students' tastes.

The book opens with a table of contents clearly identifying the names and occupations of the people whose biographies are presented. Thus, students can easily pick and choose which people or occupations interest them. A portrait of each person is also included, further aiding students in both selection and comprehension of the biographies.

In addition to a few prereading questions, each biography is followed by a set of

exercises, including ones on vocabulary, comprehension, discussion, and writing. Students, generally speaking, enjoy the exercises and are able to work through them independently. An answer key found at the end of the book allows students to work completely on their own, if desired. Each vignette is accompanied by just one writing exercise. Some instructors found these particular exercises limiting. Thus, instructors may want to assign additional or different writing exercises to give students more challenging or more appropriate writing practice.

Milada Broukal's *What a Life!* provides new readers the opportunity to learn more about important personages without having to delve into high level books to do so. It is well known that students will read more if they are interested in what they are reading. The unique and disparate biographies in *What a Life!* will interest even the most particular of students. □





## SAMPLE PAGE

Excerpt from *What a Life! Stories of Amazing People* by Milada Broukal.

### MARIE CURIE

Marie Curie was a great **scientist**. She was born Marja Sklodowska in Warsaw, Poland, in 1867. Both of her parents were teachers. When Marie was only 10 years old, her mother died.

Marie was a very good student. She loved science, math, and languages. She and her sister Bronya wanted to go to college. But in those days, only men could go to college in Poland. The girls had to go to France to study. There was not enough money for both sisters to go. So Marie worked as a teacher in Poland. She sent money to Bronya to pay for medical school in Paris. After Bronya became a doctor, she helped Marie.

When she was 24, Marie became a science student at the Sorbonne, a university in Paris. Even with her sister's help, she did not have much money. She lived in a **small** room near the college. It had no lights, no water, and no heat. Sometimes Marie only had bread and tea to eat.

Marie studied hard and **graduated** in 1894. A year later, she married Pierre Curie. He was also a scientist. They worked together for many years. Their most important **discovery** was radium. Today, doctors use the **rays** from radium to **treat** cancer. The Curies won a Nobel Prize for their discovery. This is the highest award for a scientist. Marie Curie was the first woman to receive this award.

When Marie Curie was 39, Pierre died in a road accident. But she continued their work. Curie became the first woman professor in France. In 1911, she won a second Nobel Prize. But years of working with radium **ruined** her health. She died of cancer in 1934. Her daughter Irene continued Curie's work. She also received a Nobel Prize. Sadly, Irene also got cancer and died young. Both women gave their lives for their work.

### VOCABULARY

#### ◆ MEANING

Write the correct words in the blanks.

scientist

graduated

discovery

treat

award

ruin

rays

1. Marie Curie was a \_\_\_\_\_. She studied the world around her.
2. The sun gives out \_\_\_\_\_ of light.  
Marie and Pierre \_\_\_\_\_ and found something new. No one had found it before.  
Their \_\_\_\_\_ was radium.
3. Marie Curie finished her studies at the university. She \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Radium is used to \_\_\_\_\_ cancer, but too much radium can cause cancer.  
The \_\_\_\_\_ is a prize that people receive when they do something very special. It is an important \_\_\_\_\_.

**Title:** *Lost Star: The Story of Amelia Earhart*  
**Author:** Patricia Lauber  
**Publisher:** Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1988  
175 Hillmount Road, Markham, Ont. L6C 1Z7 Canada  
Toll-free 1-800-268-3860 Toll-free fax: 1-800-387-4944  
Email: [custserve@scholastic.ca](mailto:custserve@scholastic.ca)  
**Website:** [www.scholastic.ca](http://www.scholastic.ca)  
**Available:** Your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-590-41159-4  
**Price:** \$5.50

## Lost Star

Reviewed by Jan Welten

The story of Amelia Earhart has long captured our imaginations. Her pioneering spirit, passion for flight, and the uncertain fate of her final voyage have given rise to many articles, films, TV movies, biographies and at least one novel.

*Lost Star*, a biography, traces Amelia Earhart's life from her earliest childhood to her tragic disappearance in 1937. The book gives details of her family background, and both the good and bad times she experienced as a child. It shows that, even at a very young age, Amelia displayed great curiosity about the world around her. She was a junior scientist and inventor, as well as one of the first girls in her school to wear bloomers (much to her embarrassment). The biography then goes on to talk about her time spent nursing, her growing interest in the new field of aviation, and her work as a pilot.

Students reacted very positively to *Lost Star*. Many students expressed their appreciation of the fact that this story "encourages women to believe that what men can do, women can do too." One student

commented, "She really wanted women to know that they could do things too." Some learners expressed their admiration for Earhart's personal qualities. "AE was very smart and brave," one student said. "She also had a golden heart, and she liked to help other people."

Students who read the book would like to recommend it to other adult learners. One student suggested that, for beginner readers, it would be a good idea for the teacher to read the book to the students, as it would be too difficult for them. Another student said, "It was good for someone who is up for a challenge and wants to develop their reading skills."

A number of students wanted to make maps of all Earhart's trips. One student thought this would be a good way to learn about geography while following Earhart's flight paths. The maps included in the book are not very useful. The photographs, however, which show a vibrantly alive Amelia Earhart, greatly enhance the biography. □



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## HARD TIMES

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At first, life in Des Moines went well for the Earharts. They were happy to be together. They had a nice house, and money was no longer a constant worry.

The girls had vegetable gardens in the backyard, and their mother promised to buy what they raised. Pidge worked hard, but Meely decided to experiment. She wanted to see whether the weeds or the vegetables would win out. She also said she was growing a new vegetable. It turned out to be radishes the size of potatoes with two-foot-high tops, which she called Ear-dish. But even boiled, buttered, and salted, Ear-dish seemed, like the corn husks, not to be something people were meant to eat.

To celebrate Amelia's birthday that summer, Edwin took his family to the Iowa State Fair. There

were pony rides and a merry-go-round and lots of interesting things to see and do. Among the things to see was an airplane that was on display and was going to fly. That was what Edwin wanted to see. Like most other people, he had never seen an airplane, but he had wanted to ever since reading about the Wright brothers' flight at Kitty Hawk a few years earlier. He persuaded the girls to come with him.

It was also Amelia's first sight of an airplane, but she was not impressed. She remembered years later looking briefly at a thing made of wood and rusty wire. She was much more interested in a funny hat made of a peach basket that she had just bought for fifteen cents.

That summer, for the first time in his life, Edwin Earhart was able to take a vacation. The family went to Worthington, Minnesota, for the month of August. They stayed at the postmaster's house and ate their meals at a boarding house. Good memories piled up. The girls rode a pony, played tennis, swam in the lake, went fishing, helped milk cows, and went on picnics. The whole family had its first ride in an automobile.

Back in Des Moines there were concerts and art exhibits, and of course books. If the girls had housework to do, one read aloud while the other did the chores. Their father often read to the family after dinner. He also had a talent for making up

**Title:** *Intake Assessment Materials: Fundamental Level English and Math*  
**Author:** Laurie Gould  
**Publisher:** Basic Education Department, Vancouver Community College, King Edward Campus  
**Available:** Literacy BC  
601-510 W. Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1L8  
Tel: (604) 684-0624 Fax: (604) 684-8520  
Toll free: 1-800-663-1293  
**ISBN:** 0-9682588-7-5  
**Price:** Free

## Intake Assessment Materials

Reviewed by Rena Neufeld

The *Intake Assessment Materials* manual is designed to provide Fundamental Level (0 to grade 8) instructors and adult students with a short and easy-to-use procedure for assessing a student's educational goals and experiences.

The manual is intended for use by experienced adult literacy instructors. The student assessment is divided into four parts: the initial interview, a reading assessment, a writing assessment, and a math assessment.

The assessments are designed to reduce the anxiety that many adult learners experience as they return to the learning situation. Each assessment is short, the instructions are easy to follow, and each lends itself to useful dialogue between the learner and the instructor.

The manual describes a student-friendly procedure for the initial interview that allows students to articulate their own strengths, goals, and expectations. It explains the importance of this initial interview for both the student and the instructor.

The manual includes photocopiable reading passages and mathematical worksheets, interview forms and assessment charts. It provides straightforward instructions on how to administer and analyze each assessment. Everything is adult-oriented. The printed material for the student is presented with limited text on each page, making it more readable and less intimidating.

The instructors who use this assessment manual find it to be an excellent resource, thoughtful, easy to use, comprehensive, and sensitive to the needs of adult learners. The learners who are assessed with this material find the experience positive, enjoyable, and informative. One instructor writes, "Years of experience in assessing are apparent in this resource." Another instructor comments that this resource "...has saved us a tremendous amount of time by providing all the necessary parts for an initial interview. I think the format of the material and the range of questions, reading selections, and math testing that is provided here makes this an invaluable resource for literacy instructors." □

# THE BULLETIN'S BOARD

## How the *Bulletin* is Produced

Producing the *Bulletin* is a lengthy process. It begins with our committee meeting in the spring. At that meeting, we look at material we have brought from bookstores, publishers, our kid's bookshelf, the grocery store, etc.! Sometimes someone has an oldie-goldie they have been using that we have never considered. We choose those that seem best and order three copies. We all teach in different settings, and different materials will work in some settings but not others. We struggle to be widely representative.

In the fall, members of the committee will each field-test about eight items; each item is field-tested in at least three places. Sometimes instructors who are not on the committee do the field-testing. The reports we get back are the key to all our decisions. Then in the December phone call (two hours or longer!), we decide which are the best and agree on 11 items for the spring issue. The reviews are written, the *Bulletin* is edited, desk-topped, and printed; then the whole process starts again.

In order to have plenty of materials to field-test between January and April, packages of floating books are circulated to the committee members in October. From these, and any others people want to suggest, we make up the field-test list for January.

At the spring meeting we decide which materials to review in the September publication, who will write the reviews and the writing deadlines. Editor and staff then go into gear for the second time and produce the second *Bulletin* of the year. Busy and satisfying. We hope you like the result.

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## Circulating Materials - Mailing List

The *Literacy Materials Bulletin* is distributed free to the literacy community of British Columbia and for a yearly fee of \$15 to out-of-province subscribers. Materials reviewed in the *Bulletin* are available on loan for one month. To be added to the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* mailing list, or to order back copies, or to borrow any of the materials reviewed in *Bulletins 1 - 23*, contact:

Literacy BC, Suite 601, 510 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1L8  
Telephone 1-800-663-1293 toll free in BC or (604) 684-0624 | Facsimile (604) 684-8520.



## **We would like to hear from you if you have materials to recommend, or requests.**

If you would like to recommend some materials, please tell us the title, author and publisher and why you recommend the material. If possible, send us a photocopy of one page and the table of contents.

If you would like us to seek out, field-test and review a certain type of material, please tell us the content, level and format (book, video, software, etc.).

**Please send information and questions to:**

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### **Update on the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* Committee**

Some significant changes are happening to the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* Committee. We are helping each other adjust to new roles and responsibilities while saying goodbye to a few faces and welcoming new ones.

We are pleased to maintain wide geographical representation with our new members, who include Claudia Mason (Vancouver Community College), Christina Patterson (Malaspina University-College), Ron Stinson (Selkirk College), Judy Rose (Capilano College) and Joanne Green (Heiltsuk College). Welcome aboard!

We are sad to see the following members go: Jan Weiten, Joyce Cameron, and Richard Van Camp. Thank you for your valuable time, commitment, and contributions to the *Bulletin* over the years. Your presence will be missed.

Also, Evelyn Battell will be staying on the committee as editor for one more issue before Debbie Booth-Johnson fills her shoes in the following year. A big thank you to Evelyn for remaining for this transition and also to Debbie for taking on a big job.



**Thank you**

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